



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

2800 BERLIN TURNPIKE, P.O. BOX 317546
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06131-7546



Office of the
Commissioner

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**Public Hearing – February 20, 2009
Program Review and Investigations Committee
Transportation Committee**

**Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Joseph F. Marie
Department of Transportation**

S.B. 902 – An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee Concerning the Safety of Taxicabs and Livery Vehicles.

The Department of Transportation (Department) is supportive of the elements in S.B. 902, AAC the Recommendations Of The Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee Concerning The Safety Of Taxicabs and Livery Vehicles that will lead to improved safety adherence by holders of taxi and livery certificates. The institution of consistent application fees and citation levels between the two industries is advisable. The Department does have some concerns with certain specific elements of bill.

The Department believes that the burden of compliance must be placed directly on permit holders and applicants - not on agencies. Several of the proposals change the role of the Department from oversight to direct involvement in performing functions previously performed by the permit holders or applicants. S.B. 902 is a fundamental alteration of role of the Department, and adds responsibilities for reviewing suspended driver records for single vehicle permit holders and monitoring self-inspections. These areas have always been a requirement of the permit holder. The stepped-up compliance monitoring will require significant staff and technological resources.

The Department seeks clarification with the proposed change to 13b-97(c) and 13b-103(a)3(c) regarding the prohibition against permit holders submitting new applications within a year of a violation. The intent of the change may be worthy, but a single relatively minor violation could restrict a large operator from making any new application for one year. This could be problematic for the operators. There are also questions of how to treat an application that may already have been submitted if an applicant receives a violation. Finally, there appear to be conflicts in the administrative hearing process.

The Department supports increasing the number of third-party inspections to improve compliance with taxi, livery and motor vehicle regulations. However, the random inspection methodology proposed for increased levels of inspections for the taxi and livery fleets and the follow-up required by both the Departments of Motor Vehicles and Transportation will require extensive investment in additional staff beyond the two positions mandated in the report and in improved database and information technologies.

One significant area remains unresolved in the proposed legislation. The Department has no enforcement power to investigate the most common complaint, i.e., the unregulated operator or “gypsy.”

The proposed legislation has a division of responsibilities between the Department of Transportation and the Department of Motor Vehicles. Each department enforces a different section of the statute, but both sections of the statutes are necessary to insure a safe and adequately regulated industry. There is a great deal of cooperation needed to properly enforce the rules and coordination required to execute the mandates of current laws and regulations as well as these proposed changes. This cooperation is possible, but there are inherent inefficiencies created when two separate agencies are required to be involved in enforcement activities. A more centralized oversight of these industries would permit more efficient control, coordination of resources when major field efforts are required, allow expertise to develop to manage the full range of the needs for industry oversight, and improve the customer experience for the industry.

For further information or questions, please contact Pam Sucato, Legislative Program Manager for the Department of Transportation, at (860) 594-3013.